Adl- Justice and Decree



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This text explains notions like: divine justice, individual choice, individual justice, family justice, social justice and Islamic justice through examples from the Holy Quran and ahadith from the Ahlul Bayt (as).

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Divine Justice

Every action of Allah is based upon wisdom and the knowledge of that which is in the best interest of His servants. The question of injustice and wrongdoing does not arise with regard to His actions. Injustice and wrongdoing are the result of a shortcoming or a flaw and Allah is far exalted above any flaw. As a result of the absolute justice of Allah, man is given a free choice in his actions and therefore is responsible for everything that he does.

There is a tradition related by al-Kulayni in his book of traditions entitled “al-Kafi” which illustrates the

absolute justice of Allah and how it must follow that man has free choice:

It is related that Amir al-Mu'minin, 'Ali, upon him be peace was sitting in the masjid (mosque) of the city of Kufah after his return from the Battle of Siffin, when an old man approached him and knelt down in front of him then asked him:

"O Amir al-Mu'minin, tell us our march against the people of Damascus, was it destined and decreed?"

'Ali, upon him be peace, replied: "Certainly! Old man, we do not ascend a hill nor descend into a valley except that it be destined and decreed by Allah."

Then the old man asked: "Shall I then reckon my actions to Allah, O Amir al-Mu'minin?"

"Quiet , old man, I swear by Allah, that Allah has granted you a great reward for marching out (against the enemy) and for remaining at the front, then again for returning (from the battle). You were by no means compelled in any of those actions, nor were you obliged."

The old man then asked, "How is it that we were not compelled or obliged and yet our marching, our fighting at the front and our return were all destined and decreed?"

Imam 'Ali, upon him be peace, replied, "You assume that it was an absolute and necessary decree. If it was such then reward and punishment, commanding and forbidding and reprimands or censure from Allah would be invalid and untenable. The promise and the warning would lose their meaning. There would be no need to criticize the wrongdoer nor to praise the righteous. In fact, the wrongdoer would be more deserving of goodness than the righteous and the righteous more deserving punishment than the wrongdoer. (Because the wrongdoer had already suffered the effects of his wrong action at the time that he performed it, while the righteous had already received the pleasure of his good action). This is the saying of the idol worshippers, the enemies of the Merciful Lord, the party of Shaytan, and the fatalists of this Ummah (community of believers).

"Allah, the most Blessed and Exalted endows something with free choice (to either do it or not) or He forbids something and warns (about it). He gives much in exchange for little. He is not disobeyed because He is overcome by someone, nor is He obeyed because He forces obedience. He does not turn everything over to man, nor did He create heavens and earth and everything in between them in falsehood. He did not send the Prophets as bearers of good tidings and warning foolishly. That is the assumption of those that reject Allah..."

Individual Justice

Individual justice is when one refrains from slander, lies, the greater sins and attempts to abstain from all unworthy actions. The person who refrains from these things is considered to be "just" or as it is said in Arabic "'Adil". This person can, in accordance with the stipulations established in the shari'ah (divine

law), issue judgements, govern, be in a position of leadership, as well as take part in various other activities related to the maintenance and administration of the Ummah. The person who lacks these qualities, however, is not eligible for these positions of responsibility.

Leadership and administration have an organic role in the development of a society, in its education, and in the well-being or corruption of that society. For this reason it has come to us in the teachings of Islam, that the root of corruption and its very core is the corrupt and unjust leader. Likewise, the root and basis for goodness, blessings and virtue within the society is the truthful and just leader. Imam 'Ali, upon him be peace, said:

"Good men are delivered and saved by the just leader, but the corrupt perish with their corrupt leader."

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq, upon him be peace, has said:

"Truth is obliterated in the governance of the unjust ruler, and falsehood is bought to life. Likewise, oppression lies and corruption appears..."

In many traditions the rule of the oppressor is counted as a form of kufr (that is, the complete rejection of Allah).

Social Justice

Social justice is when man does not neglect the rights of others and he sees others as being equal before the divine law. He does not transgress with regard to carrying out the established laws nor does he fall under the influence of emotions and sentiments when he makes his decisions.

We are commanded to act in justice in numerous ayat of the Qur'an as well as in the tradition of the Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family.

Indeed, Allah commands justice and goodness and giving to relatives.... (***Surat-un-Nahl, 16: 90***)

In this ayah, Allah has made clear the principles and foundations for transactions between men, in addition to making those in Iman aware of the basis for virtuous conduct. He has also given a clear indication of what it is that pleases Him. He has commanded men to act in justice and goodness and to maintain the laws of kinship which bind them. We have discussed justice above from the standpoint of society, that is from the standpoint of shari'ah. The deeper inner meaning or the meaning from the standpoint of haqiqah is also indicated in this ayah Allah has commanded his slaves to act in justice in their transactions with regard to creation as well as their transactions with their lower selves or their nafs.

Their transactions with Allah should be based upon their admission and affirmation (of their own powerlessness and destitution before Him). Their transactions with their own nafs or lower self should be based on their acting in opposition to its whims and desires (for this world).

Another way of expressing it is that one should act in agreement with Allah, with sincere intentions towards others, and contrary to one's nafs. The meaning of acting in agreement with Allah is the acceptance of His commandments. The meaning of action with sincere intentions towards others is to give them goodness through your speech, your actions, to deal with them earnestly with determination and equity and to refrain from placing your own burden upon their shoulders. You should strive to cover their shortcomings and regardless of what state you find them in you should not withhold your concern and mercy from them. You should respect the aged and give your affection and love to the young.

As for the meaning of justice with regards to the nafs or the lower self, one should restrain the nafs from that which will bring about destruction.

It is in the Holy Qur'an that justice and equity are most clearly elucidated. We are informed in the Qur'an that the basis of all existence is justice and equity. Likewise, it tells us that the qualities of injustice are not found in the Creator and that He judges His servants only through these principles of justice.

Allah (***Himself***) ***is a witness that there is no god but Him, and the angels and the men of learning also are witness, maintaining His creation in justice: there is no god but Him, the Almighty, the Wise.*** (***Surat Ali 'Imran, 3:18***)

Justice and equity is the standard used in the creation of this universe:

And the heavens He lifted up and He established the balance. (***Surat-ur-Rahman, 55:7***)

The Prophet may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family, said with regard to this ayah: "It is with justice and equity that the heavens and earth were established".

Allah tells us in the Qur'an in reference to the Shari'ah and the sending of the Prophets:

We have sent Our Messengers with clear proofs and We have sent down with them the Book and the Scale, so that the people might observe justice. (***Surat-ul-Hadid, 57:25***)

As we have seen, social justice rests upon the justice of the Shari'ah which includes the teachings of all the Messengers, upon them be peace.

Further in the Qur'an it is stated:

Say: My Lord has commanded me to justice. (***Surat-ul-A'raf, 7:29***)

Justice is considered by Allah to be a requisite for leadership and the imamate:

And when His Lord tried Ibrahim with (***His***) ***commands and He fulfilled them, He said: "I have made you a leader*** (***Imam***) ***for mankind. He*** (***Ibrahim***) ***said: And from my offspring*** (***will there be leaders***)***: He*** (***Allah***) ***replied: My covenant does not include the oppressors.*** (***Surat-ul-Baqarah, 2:124***)

From this we understood that leadership and the imamate are divine covenants which are not deserved by the unjust.

Justice is also taken into account with regards to the judge:

...and let one who is just judge amongst you. (***Surat-ul-Ma'idah, 5:95***)

In the Qur'an there are more than fifteen ayat which specifically point to justice in the area of politics, judgement, and society from the standpoint of the individual, the family and the Ummah. The Islamic society revolves on the axis of justice and equity in its laws, beliefs and its view of life and existence.

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